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Comment: An effort is being made to ascertain the truth of this report, as well as any details regarding the recent visit of Premier Hoxha to Moscow. In this connection, your attention is directed to State Department cable #2974, dated 30 November 1949, which suggested that Hoxha's new military title (promoted from Colonel General to General of the Army on 26 November) might be the first step in a precautionary move on the part of the USSR to strengthen her control over Albania, preparatory to sending a high-ranking Soviet officer to Albania. An article in the New York Herald Tribune, dated 13 December 1949, from Belgrade, pointed out that Hoxha had not returned to Albania for the all-important Independence Day Communist celebration on 29 November; the dominant figure at the ceremony was Major General Mehmet Shehu. This same article states, in part, that according to reports from Communist circles in Tirana, "in party offices pictures of General Shehu are going up on the walls and that in a few buildings those of General Hoxha are being removed". In addition, FBIB report of 19 December relayed the French Press Service bulletin that Hoxha had returned on 15 December 1949 from his trip to Moscow, on which he had been accompanied by the Soviet Minister to Tirana. Varied conjectures were given as to the reasons for his trip, but nothing to indicate a fall from favor with the USSR. FBIB report #243 of 19 December 1949 recorded an Albanian broadcast which stated that, on 18 December, General Hoxha had granted a farewell audience to the Hungarian Minister, and finally a spokesman of the Albanian Legation in Belgrade stated on 20 December that General Hoxha had returned to Tirana from a visit to Moscow.

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